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EASTERN EUROPEAN INTELLIGENCER

20 January 1968

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Bulgaria Guards Against Extinction

Bulgaria's declining birthrate, which was down to a record low of 14.9 per thousand in 1966 (compared to 19.4 in 1965 for the US), has raised the fearful specter--at least for a Bulgarian--that in three or four centuries Bulgaria will disappear as a nation. A party/government decree published on 31 December encourages families to have three children and cracks down on the heretofore easy abortion policy. The regime increased the material incentives to have three children, but not more, in an apparent attempt not to subsidize the higher birth rates of Bulgaria's Turkish and Gypsy minorities.

The decree provides for both increased one-time payments and increased monthly payments. Upon the birth of their third child, for example, parents will receive 500 leva (approximately \$250 US), a tidy sum by Bulgarian standards. In addition, child care institutions are to be increased, maternity leave benefits liberalized and job preference given to parents with two or three children. Abortions will now require the approval of a three man medical committee except for women over 45 who already have three children. The decree also raised from 5% to 10% the special income tax on unmarried persons over 30

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and childless couples married over five years. [REDACTED]

COMMENT: As they have become more industrialized Bulgarians have discovered that children are a luxury rather than an economic asset. This trend has been compounded by a serious housing shortage and a wage price structure which forces all adult members of a household to work. New year price increases on many consumer goods and services will exacerbate this problem, and any future birth rate gains will probably stem from the stiffer abortion regulations.

Hungary's Increased Birth Rate Promises Solution to Population Problems

The Hungarian press has hailed the increased birth rate in 1967 as an indication that the unsatisfactory trend toward low birth rates has been halted. Last year Hungary's birth rate exceeded fourteen per thousand for the first time since 1960. The press attributed the increase to Hungary's social welfare system. [REDACTED]

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COMMENT: Hungary's birth rate was 13.1 in 1965 per thousand, one of the lowest in the world. Since 1959 there have been more clinical abortions than live births in Hungary. There is no evidence to suggest that the incidence of abortion has decreased, moreover, the social conditions causing the high abortion rate have not appreciably changed.

Berlin's Hardship Pass Office Continues to Aid Thousands

An average of 3,000 passes per month were issued to West Berliners to visit relatives in the eastern portion of the city during 1967. More than 36,000 applications were approved by the East German authorities out of a total of some 40,000. Because of the provision allowing children of pass applicants to be included on one adult pass, a total of more than 58,000 persons visited sick relatives, attended funerals or otherwise went on emergency visits to East Berlin last year. [REDACTED]

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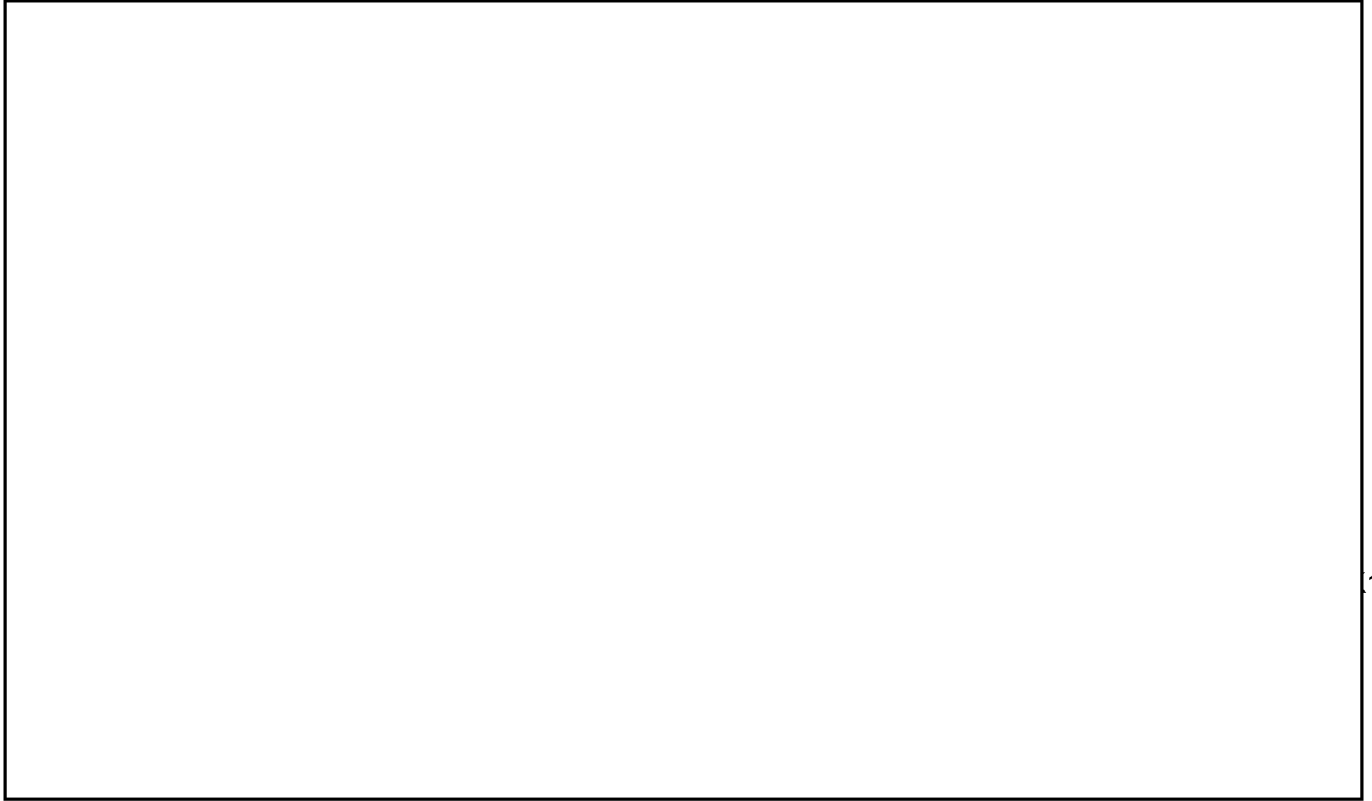
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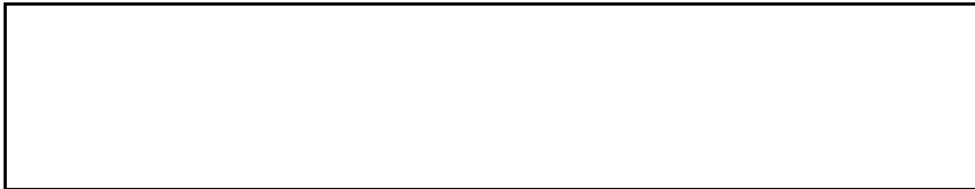
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